

Message Text

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PAGE 01 BOGOTA 08071 292058Z
ACTION CU-05

INFO OCT-01 ARA-10 ISO-00 /016 W
-----103760 292059Z /70
R 292020Z AUG 77
FM AMEMBASSY BOGOTA
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 3466
INFO USIA WASHDC

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STATE FOR CU/ARA
USIA FOR ILA

E.O. 11652: N/A
TAGS: SCUL, OEXC
SUBJ: CULTURAL AGREEMENT BETWEEN USG AND GOC

1. IN RECENT MONTHS MINISTRIES OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS AND EDUCATIONS
HAVE QUERIED EMBASSY REGARDING LEGAL STATUS OF BINATIONAL CENTER
NETWORK WHICH OPERATES THROUGHOUT COLOMBIA AND EMBASSY'S RELAT-
IONSHIP TO THESE CENTERS.

2. BOTH MINISTRIES HAVE MADE EXHAUSTIVE SEARCH OF THEIR FILES
IN ATTEMPT TO FIND AGREEMENT SUBSCRIBED TO BY BOTH GOVERNMENTS
WHICH WOULD JUSTIFY PREFERENTIAL TREATMENT THESE CENTERS BY GOC.
AS FAR AS EMBASSY AWARE, NO SUCH AGREEMENT HAS EVER BEEN SIGNED.

3. MINISTRY OF EDUCATION IN PARTICULAR IS FACED WITH
DIFFICULT PROBLEM SINCE THERE ARE SOME IN ITS RANKS WHO RBN-
TEND THAT BNCS ARE, IN FACT, PRIVATE SCHOOLS AND THEREFORE
SUBJECT TO REGULATION BY MINISTRY. SEVERAL CENTERS HAVE BEEN
VISITED BY MOE OFFICIALS WHO CLAIM AUTHORITY TO INSPECT THEM
WITH A VIEW TOWARD REGULATING THEIR ACTIVITIES. SOME MOE
OFFICIALS REFER TO CENTERS AS "PIRATE SCHOOLS."

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4. MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS SYMPATHETIC TO MOE POSITION AND
HAS INFORMALLY ASKED EMBASSY TO CLARIFY ITS RELATIONSHIP TO
CENTERS. MINISTRY HAS RECENTLY HELD UP VISAS FOR AMERICAN
BNC TEACHERS TO INDICATE TO US THEY VIEW THE PROBLEM WITH
SOME CONCERN.

5. INFORMAL DISCUSSIONS WITH GOC OFFICIALS INDICATE THEY

WOULD LIKE TO RESOLVE PROBLEM BY NEGOTIATING CULTURAL AGREEMENT WITH US. COLOMBIA HAS SUCH AGREEMENTS WITH A NUMBER OF COUNTRIES WHICH PROVIDE IN GENERAL TERMS FOR CULTURAL AND INFORMATIONAL EXCHANGES.

6. EMBASSY BELIEVES SUCH A SOLUTION IS RATIONAL AND DESIRABLE. IN SHORT TERM IT WOULD SOLVE BNC PROBLEM AND GIVE CENTERS A SPECIAL STATUS CONFERRED BY GOC WHICH WOULD PERMIT THEM TO CONTINUE TO OPERATE WITHOUT UNDUE GOVERNMENT INTERFERENCE. IN LONG TERM SUCH AN AGREEMENT WOULD BE PROTECTIVE OF USG INFORMATION AND CULTURAL PROGRAMS WHICH CONCEIVABLY IN FUTURE COULD BE TARGET OF ATTACK BY UNFRIENDLY ELEMENTS AS IN BNC CASE.

7. PERUSAL OF AGREEMENTS COLOMBIA HAS SIGNED WITH FRANCE AND WEST GERMANY INDICATES THEY ARE UNEXCEPTIONAL "UMBRELLA" AGREEMENTS GRANTING WIDE AND GENERAL AUTHORITY TO CARRY ON INFORMATION AND CULTURAL PROGRAMS.

8. EMBASSY REQUESTS DEPARTMENT'S PERMISSION TO BEGIN DISCUSSIONS WITH GOC ON THIS MATTER. WOULD APPRECIATE ANY APPLICABLE GUIDELINES DEPARTMENT MAY HAVE TO OFFER AS WELL AS COPIES OF AGREEMENTS BETWEEN USG AND MEXICO AND COSTA RICA. DREXLER

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01-Jan-1994 12:00:00 am
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: AGREEMENTS, CULTURAL EXCHANGES
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Sent Date: 29-Aug-1977 12:00:00 am
Decaption Date: 01-Jan-1960 12:00:00 am
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 22 May 2009
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1977BOGOTA08071
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: N/A
Errors: N/A
Expiration:
Film Number: D770312-0367
Format: TEL
From: BOGOTA
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1977/newtext/t19770814/aaaaalhz.tel
Line Count: 85
Litigation Code IDs:
Litigation Codes:
Litigation History:
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Message ID: 240c5851-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Office: ACTION CU
Original Classification: LIMITED OFFICIAL USE
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 2
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: LIMITED OFFICIAL USE
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: n/a
Retention: 0
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 11-Jan-2005 12:00:00 am
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review Media Identifier:
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
SAS ID: 1455100
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: CULTURAL AGREEMENT BETWEEN USG AND GOC
TAGS: SCUL, OEXC, US, CO
To: STATE
Type: TE
vdkgvwkey: odbc://SAS/SAS.dbo.SAS_Docs/240c5851-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Review Markings:
Margaret P. Grafeld
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
22 May 2009
Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 22 May 2009